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**TRANSCRIPT FROM DECEMBER 13, 2022: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DELIVERS
REMARKS AT NYC SPEAKS ACTION PLAN LAUNCH**

Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright, Strategic Initiatives: All right. Is New York City Speaks in the house? All right, we up in here, up in Gracie Mansion. Welcome, welcome, welcome, welcome. And thank you, thank you, thank you. New York City Speaks really was born out of the campaign for Mayor Eric Adams. It was a grassroots campaign. It was led and driven by everyday New Yorkers who wanted to make a difference and who sat in the seat of the mayoralty of the City of New York. And as a result of that activation and investment, the mayor tells the story that he went to mayor school and he was learning every day and hearing from people, what are your concerns, what are your ideas on how to solve these concerns, and really activating and engaging all of New York, not the typical people who might respond to a poll, but the everyday people.

And so when a group of organizations came to us and said, "What would it be like if we could launch a campaign," essentially is what New York City Speaks is, "but really a survey to really hear from New Yorkers, tabulate that data, and turn the data into action?" And that was ... I guess it was August, maybe August, September we got started. Wonderful funders joined us along the way and here we are, about 13 months later, with a phenomenal action plan. So thank you.

You're going to hear from some of those phenomenal people today and just so much thanks and appreciation, but the biggest thanks and appreciation really is for Mayor Eric Adams. This is his vision, that we have to stay connected to the community, that we have to provide opportunity, to really, really be engaged, to really hear from, be in dialogue and problem solve together. So New York City Speaks is here to stay, and the Adams Administration, and that is due to the leadership of Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thank you so much. And just really want to thank the team and Sheena's vision. It's one thing to lay out a plan, it's another thing to execute that plan and move it forward. And the sponsors, some of them are listed over here. Oftentimes, you will see folks like Robinhood, Goodnation, Open Society Foundations, the New York Community Trust, Galaxy Gives, FWD.us, the New York Women's Foundation, CityBridge, Trinity Church, Wall Street, and Carnegie Corporation.

The boards, as Rich Barry stated when I said feel like money in the room, he said, "Yeah, it's not our money." The donors are just so important. And that is what must happen in the city. And I really want us to lean into this space that ... My early years as a car mechanic, it didn't matter how good an engine was, that if it was four cylinders and it was operating on three cylinders, it would not operate. We have been a city where we have not operated on all of our cylinders.

And the cylinders is those philanthropic organizations, like the ones we have here who go out and raise money. It is our corporate community that's crucial to assisting and have good community corporate partnerships, it's government and the role we must play in government, but the most crucial part of that last cylinder is in this room. It's you. And we wanted to say to you that it's one thing for us to say you speak. If we don't listen, what's the purpose of you speaking?

And so New York City Speaks means that the mayor is listening. And you may not be old enough to remember, but to me, you are E.F. Hutton. When you speak, everyone listens. And by speaking and listening doesn't mean that we're always going to agree. We must get into a space where we are deep listeners, where we seek to understand so we can be understood, and we get in a room and figure out the common denominators.

And you're going to see that there may be 10 items on the agenda, two of them the most challenging, eight of them we all agree on. 8.8 million people in this city, we have 35 million opinions. But we were blown away when we did the analysis and we noticed how housing was coming up across the board, public safety across the board, mental health for young people across the board, employment across the board.

So there were some common denominators, no matter how complex the city is, no matter the various languages, over 62,000 people who contribute. I think close to 16,000 or 18,000 young people responded. So no matter how complex our city is, no matter if you're arguing about if you like the Nets, or the Knicks, or the Jets, or the Giants, if you like the Rangers or the Islanders, there are some things that we have foundational understandings about.

So if we look at those items that are important, that we analyze from you, and then we take those items, and then all cylinders are moving in unison to move us forward, we can accomplish the task we're looking for.

That's how we do it. We come together as one and we speak in a common voice, even in multiple languages. This is a great moment for us as a city. And I know, daily, we're told about what is wrong about the city. As the person that sat down for a portrait told the artist, "I know you see my scar, but remember I have a face," don't let people look at your scar and take away your face. We have a face. The city is a vibrant place and we're not coming back, New York, we're back.

Audience: We been back.

Mayor Adams: We're back and we're coming back together. It's not about leaving anyone behind. It's about how do we do it together with the dignity and respect that we all deserve as New Yorkers. An amazing team, an amazing accomplishment. Hearing your voice allowed us to speak, to produce the product that we were looking for. You exceeded our expectations, you exceeded it. When we asked people to respond, we were happy. We thought we'd get about

5,000 or 10,000. Once we cracked 60,000, we said, "You know what? We're onto something." It was as though you were saying, "I can't wait until people ask me something so I can tell them what I'm thinking and what I'm feeling." So thank you so much. We're going to bring on the brother who was the core person at the top, my good friend, Dr. Blake. Dr. Blake.

Dr. Shango Blake, Co-Executive Director, NYC Speaks: Want to thank Mayor Eric Adams for a couple of things. One, he led a grassroots movement people's campaign. And he led this campaign and, in that campaign, he said, "I am you." That campaign led to a people's bottom up civic engagement strategy. And we want to thank the mayor for continuing to show New Yorkers that you are us and that our voice matters. We want to thank the first deputy mayor, Sheena Wright, for protecting the vision of a people's-led movement. We truly appreciate your support and we appreciate the support of your team, Betsy MacLean, Aarati Cohly. We want to thank all of the deputy mayors and commissioners who rallied behind Sheena to support this vision of NYC Speaks.

And we want to thank our philanthropic organizations. They didn't just give the money, they actually participated in community conversation and action planning. They were involved in the process, deeply invested not just financially, but through their actions. But you know we got to thank a few others. Before I get to that, I want to thank my co-executive director, Jose Serrano-McClain. It's been wonderful walking this journey with you and being up late at night, crunching the data, trying to figure out the next steps forward.

We want to thank your team, Kristina Pecorelli, Hannah Glosser, Adina Jahan, Alejandra Cabrales, and the entire HR&A team. And now, I want to ... I'm from Jamaica, Queens, so we say shout out. And I want to give a shout out to all of the civic policy chairs and members. We did it. To all the community-based organizations and community data partners, thank you. We did it. To all of the young people, ages 14 to 17, who participated in NYC Youth Speaks, right, Melissa? We did it. Well, what did we go? What did we do? 62,000 respondents across every residential neighborhood. 18,400 youth responded, ages 14 to 17. And as a result, we collected three million points of data.

Audience: Yes, we did.

Blake: We went into 300 residential ZIP codes. This is during COVID, y'all. We had 150 ground canvasses.

Audience: Come on.

Blake: We touched 33 neighborhoods that often are neglected, priority neighborhoods, Black, brown, Asian neighborhoods that are often not consulted and often feel disenfranchised and not heard from. So we did it.

Audience: That's how. We did it.

Blake: We created a survey that was the FUBU of research, for us, by us. 80 members of the Civic Policy Council, we tackled education and youth development, housing and neighborhoods, health and wellness, art and culture, economic vitality and work development, racial justice and

equity, public safety, climate and infrastructure. We did that. 50 community conversations, 35 NYC Youth Ambassadors putting their stories behind the data, the people giving their experience.

And so I want to thank again our mayor and his administration who were fully present and collaborated with New Yorkers in these action plans that we'll now see unfold. We came to a consensus on these actions.

We have introduced a new way of civic engagement. We have been restoring the trust of people in the process and restoring the relationship between government and the people. Thank you.

Now, I have the great honor of introducing a young person who participated as a youth ambassador, Omosefe. She has a beautiful story to tell about her involvement as a youth ambassador, how NYC Speaks and her working with people within this city has now led to wonderful opportunities for her. So let's give her a round of applause.

Omosefe Noruwa, NYC Speaks Youth Ambassador: Good evening, everyone, and a special thank you to Mayor Adams, Deputy Mayor Wright, Dr. Blake, and Ms. Cohly for inviting me to this wonderful event. On April 29th, 2022, I was invited to participate in a community conversation facilitated by Melissa Cisco and George Patterson from the NYC Department of Education. The topics discussed were equity and racial justice and education and youth development. I joined the former discussion and, with my fellow Borough Student Advisory Council or BSAC representatives, I analyzed racial equity and challenges across the city.

I recall Ms. Cisco, who helped me launch NYC Youth Speaks, moved the discussion along while Chancellor Banks notified her that my hand was raised and signaled her to allow me to speak. After speaking, I became an NYC Youth Speaks ambassador and participated in numerous community conversations. I believe my high school community and experiences fostered my passion for activism and NYC Speaks showed me how to realize that passion.

I became familiar with my voice as a freshman in high school. I remember, this year of high school, the valedictorian and the salutatorian of the class of 2020 were two black girls. So there were two black girls, like myself, and they were also on student government, like how I am now. This motivated me to do my best in school because I realized my potential is limitless. It's not confined to the boxes cultivated on the basis of my skin color or my ethnic background. This shows the importance of not only minority representation, but youth representation. Thank you.

What matters is seeing others like me and my peers in these rooms that weren't traditionally made for us. It's about making it for us, making sure every voice is represented. It's using our city's youth and inspiring them to break boundaries through collective activism and our fervency to educate ourselves. In June of 2022, I was invited to have a community conversation with the mayor and Deputy Mayor Wright. During this meeting, I presented my program, Promote Minority Education, PME, that day to Mayor Adams. This was due to the lack of educational resources for students of color, which was discussed at numerous NYC Youth Speaks community conversations.

The mayor then asked me about any progress PME has made and I was honest with him. I told him that it's a student-led initiative meant to bridge the gap between high achieving, yet

underrepresented high schoolers and underrepresented middle schoolers in need of tutoring and mentorship. However, being only 16 and developing the idea of this program at 15 years old, it was hard to get anything done. Mayor Adams said to me, "This is the city of yes," and offered to support PME and he wanted to see the program offered at NYC Schools.

Audience: Take your time, baby. Take your time.

Noruwa: As a result, PME Success Network LLC plans to mentor underserved middle schoolers on Staten Island's North Shore and to hopefully expand to the rest of the city. This is all thanks to help from Ms. Cisco, who helped me incorporate PME, and Superintendent Wilson for helping me get the program into Staten Island schools. I couldn't have come this far without NYC Youth Speaks. It connected me with additional opportunities. And although I'm still into STEM, it shifted me towards political activism. Recently, I just attended Yale's Model Congress and presented a bill on providing additional grants to Title One schools for financial literacy classes. My bill passed unanimously. And all of this is because politics isn't restricted to an area of knowledge. It seeps through all of our different ways of life. With programs like NYC Youth Speaks and my company, PME Success Network, we're creating a web of outspoken and ambitious students. We are the present and we are the future. Thank you. I'm passing it back to Deputy Mayor Wright.

Deputy Mayor Wright: Doesn't that sound like a future mayor of the City of New York, right? Yes, another round for Omoosefe. I would think we're closing out, right? This is our finale, this drum roll. We're closing out with Betsy MacLean. Yes. Can we get a ... Betsy is one of those very special people who has an unlimited number of skills and attributes, brilliance, passion, fashion sense, and commitment.

This was just a germ of an idea and I really have to say that Betsy is the mother of New York City Speaks.

Not only is she the mother of New York City Speaks and she really made it come into fruition, bringing together all of the partners, really leading the vision for this work over this year and some months, but she also is the newly appointed chief engagement officer for the City of New York. As I said, engagement is a cornerstone of this administration. We have wonderful, wonderful leaders who are in the administration and Betsy will be making sure that it's coordinated, aligned, focused, and have a multiplying effect. We could not be more lucky and just grateful to have her leadership and her vision. Betsy MacLean.

Betsy MacLean, Chief Engagement Officer, City of New York: Hey, everybody. Hey everybody, it's so good to see you all. This is the most beautiful room I think I've ever seen. It's a beautiful night and we have so much to celebrate. One of my favorite sayings of all time is that work is love made visible. And if that's true, I know that NYC Speaks was an epic endeavor and, when we set out to engage as many tens of thousands of New Yorkers as humanly possible, we knew what we were getting ourselves into. Our eyes were wide open, but everyone threw in, many people in this room threw in with so much love, so much love for our city, so much love for our neighbors, for our neighborhoods, for our families.

And that's what I spent a lot of my career, working with communities across New York City, really thinking about how we make neighborhoods, and schools, and health clinics, and parks,

and places where we really feel like we belong. And part of belonging is having a say over how that stuff works.

So that's one of the most exciting things, I feel like, of my professional career, is that this... we're making this so, that this is one of the greatest outcomes of NYC Speaks, is that we are actually restructuring government so that community engagement is a central component of every single thing we do. We'll be coordinating with every single agency across the city to ensure that communities are engaged in a way that's inclusive, that's accessible, that's innovative, that's accountable, all the things that community engagement needs to be and hasn't been for way, way too long.

So I am super excited to be partners with all of you in this journey. I have a million thank yous, but one very, very, very special thank you, I'm going to get her out here, is the spark, the joy of NYC Speaks, Aarati Cohly. I met Aarati on my very first day at City Hall and, I'm telling you, it is the best, most strategic, most fun, most inspirational meeting that I've had since. And so I feel super lucky to be partners with Aarati in all of this stuff.

I also really want to thank the tremendous leaders of all the engagement agencies who are in the room, who've been reappointed and newly appointed. Our chief democracy officer, Kathleen Daniel, is in the house. Great to have her. The commissioner of a community affairs unit, Fred Kreizman, is in the house, I believe, somewhere. Adrienne Lever, the executive director of the Public Engagement Unit is here. Laura Rog, our chief service officer of NYC Service, and Dr. Sarah Sayeed, the chair and executive director of the Civic Engagement Commission.

I'm so excited to see what will be made possible by joining those forces together and really working both with focus, but also with support from City Hall to really make our impact felt across the city. Super quickly, there are some folks in the room who are part of the transition, the Civic Engagement Committee of the transition team. This is where the foundations of the Chief Engagement Office were created. So really, so thankful to folks who've been participating from day one. I'm looking at my list because I just want to make sure I don't leave anybody out. I also really, really, really want to thank Jose, Tina, Hannah, Dr. Blake. They're our partners in all things epic.

And then two quick final thank yous. Big thank you to Mayor Adams. I didn't think I would ever say this, but I actually think Mayor Adams might never think we are doing enough engagement, which is an amazing gift for folks who know how important that is to our democracy, to our city, to equity, to justice.

And then my final very, very special thank you to my partner in crime, Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright. And I know you all know this because you're all friends with her, but she is a woman for whom impossible does not exist. And for someone like me, that's all I could ever want in a partner, in a leader, in our city. So thank you all so much. I hope everyone gets to go have some good treats and drinks and enjoy the evening. And we have so much to feel proud of and we have a lot more work to do. So you'll be hearing from us. Thank you.

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